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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MONROVIA 000249

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DEPT FOR AF/W-PDAVIS, INR/AA BGRAVES

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SUBJECT: LIBERIA: PORT SECURITY REMAINS A PROBLEM IN MONROVIA

REF: A. 07 MONROVIA 1293

[1](#)B. 07 MONROVIA 846

[1](#)C. 07 MONROVIA 627

[1](#)D. 07 MONROVIA 456

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Port Security remains deficient in Liberia and the Port of Monrovia is unlikely to reach compliance with the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code anytime soon, but technical and financial assistance could accelerate the process. Regional representatives from the United States Coast Guard (USCG) International Port Security (IPS) program discussed security shortcomings and requirements for ISPS code compliance with port, civil maritime and other government of Liberia (GOL) officials during a March 3-7 visit to Monrovia. The visit highlighted the impact lax security had on shipping costs and commodity prices and noted measures that are required to bring Monrovia's port into compliance with ISPS code. USAID is considering providing technical assistance to the National Port Authority (NPA) to develop an appropriate Port Facility Security Plan for ISPS compliance. Even with external assistance focused on port security, full ISPS compliance is unlikely unless accompanied by a full overhaul of port management. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (U) Visiting USCG International Port Security Liaison Officers (IPSLOs) Adam Shaw and Doug Schneider met March 3-7 with directors, managers and security officers from the NPA, GOL officials from the Bureau of Maritime Affairs (BMA), Liberia Reconstruction and Development Committee (LRDC), and Ministry of Transportation (MOT), and representatives from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), as well as representatives of shipping companies. Shaw and Schneider explained to the Liberian counterparts (many of whom were new to their positions since the last USCG visit in March 2007) the impact that poor port security was having on shipping companies doing business in Liberia, particularly higher insurance rates and delays entering other ports of call where ISPS code is vigorously enforced. They highlighted that the additional costs incurred by shippers are passed on to Liberian consumers in the form of higher commodity prices. They also noted that shipping companies could not operate directly between Liberia and the United States because Monrovia's ISPS deficiencies required the USCG to conduct time-consuming and costly inspections of all vessels coming from Liberia. (Note: Firestone Liberia maintains a self-contained ship-to-port interface at the Freeport of Monrovia that is ISPS compliant and the USCG has granted Firestone a waiver for its vessels traveling between Monrovia and the United States. End note).

[1](#)3. (SBU) Based on their discussions and a physical evaluation of the port, Shaw and Schneider observed only minimal progress on port security since the last USCG Assessment in March 2007. The NPA was unable to provide the USCG team with a copy of the port's security

strategy. Shipping companies told the USCG that the port's ISPS unit often boarded ships with a "shopping list" of desired payoffs and containers still regularly disappeared out the back gate. Shippers noted that the day the USCG team arrived was the first time in months they had witnessed enforcement of gate entry and exit procedures. The port does not have a patrol boat and the USCG witnessed swimmers entering port waters and approaching ships at berth. The port has not completed any of the recommendations from the International Maritime Organization's "Self-Assessment" and nobody in the GOL was aware of the need to establish a Designated Authority (DA) outside the NPA to oversee ISPS compliance.

14. (U) Port and government officials expressed a desire to improve port security and requested guidance and assistance from the United States. Shaw and Schneider emphasized that security upgrades need not require expensive equipment but rather a practical plan and vigilant enforcement. They advised port management to focus on basic procedures and enforcement of existing rules and called on the government to take the legal measures necessary to establish a Designated Authority for ISPS. Although the GOL is considering moving the BMA under the Ministry of Finance, this would not occur anytime soon and in the meantime the USCG opined that the BMA was the most appropriate seat for the ISPS DA, an authority that could likely be granted by Executive Order.

15. (U) USAID is considering a proposal to fund technical assistance to the NPA to enhance port security. The USCG suggested that USAID fund advisory services that would assist the Port of Monrovia to conduct an assessment of its vulnerabilities, draft an appropriate security plan and provide ongoing training/monitoring of the port's ISPS unit. At the national level, assistance in drafting the executive order to create a Designated Authority and provide adequate and appropriate training for the DA would be helpful. Shaw said a USCG Training Assessment team is expected to visit Monrovia

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soon to tailor a USCG-sponsored training mission to Liberia's needs. Although the USCG emphasized that most of the necessary security enhancements were a function of planning and implementation rather than expenditure for additional hardware, they did note the need for some investment in communications equipment, lighting, and perimeter reinforcements, both at the central wharf and outlying piers where security lapses are even more pronounced.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Insecurity at the port is both dangerous and costly. Enhanced port security will improve port efficiency, counter illegal trafficking, and help lower prices and facilitate trade. The NPA lacks the capacity and focus to implement the measures necessary to bring port security into compliance with ISPS code. Absent external assistance, improvements are unlikely anytime soon. USAID efforts to start the Port of Monrovia on the path of ISPS compliance are welcome. But any contribution to port security is unlikely to succeed in isolation and must be accompanied by continued port management reform the GOL committed to pursue in its December 2007 Memorandum of Understanding with the United States, World Bank and UNMIL. END COMMENT.

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